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DUNIGAN, MARTHA MALICOAT. Sculpture in Clay and Cast Iron,
Wood-block Prints and Drawings: Studies of Mass and Space.
(1974)
Directed by: Peter Agostini. Pp. 4.

SCULPTURE IN CLAY AND CAST IRON,

WOOD-BLOCK PRINTS AND DRAWINGS:

STUDIES OF MASS AND SPACE

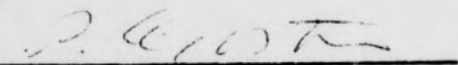
by

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A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

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Approved by


Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following
committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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April 15, 1974
Date of Acceptance by Committee

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CATALOGUE

Sculpture

1. Untitled, round stoneware form (1974)
2. Untitled, stoneware form with crack (1974)
3. Untitled, clay form with steel base (1974)
4. Untitled, low clay form on walnut base (1974)
5. Untitled, small, round porcelain form (1973)
6. Untitled, long porcelain form (1973)
7. Untitled, flat, curved form - cast iron (1974)
8. Untitled, small, round form, square base - cast iron
(1973)
9. Untitled, round form on walnut base - cast iron (1974)
10. Untitled, large, balanced form - cast iron (1974)
11. Hill Form I - cast iron (1974)
12. Hill Form II - cast iron (1974)

Wood-block Prints and Drawings

1. Figure I - wood-block print 14X18 inches (1974)
2. Figure II - wood-block print 14X18 inches (1974)
3. Hills I - wood-block print 14X18 inches (1974)
4. Hills II - wood-block print 14X18 inches (1974)
5. Nude Back - pencil drawing 8X9 inches (1974)
6. Fragments - pencil drawing 10X12 inches (1974)

Over the past few years, the central focus of my studio work has been wood-block printing and clay sculpture. My source of reference was land formations: hills, rock fronts, mountains or sand which had been cut into and eroded by wind or water. The ideas I worked with were ones dealing with mass and space, and the ways in which a form is changed by forces from outside or within. Prints from two years ago were simple arrangements of black and white forms. Early clay pieces were hollowed-out wedged forms and twisted, sliced and squeezed sketches in stoneware and porcelain clays. All of these works had an ambiguous quality; they seemed to refer to both landscape and figure.

To clarify this ambiguous interpretation I devoted my attention to working from a model and to investigating the interaction of the different parts of the body with the space around it. During the past year I drew and modeled in clay from the figure. My main point of focus was the back, hips, and specifically the lower part of the figure where there is the greatest feeling of weight and volume. I attempted to capture the thrusts, the twists and the balance of the figure in these drawings and clay studies.

My thesis exhibition consists of a group of sculptures which were done without direct contact with a model, but which reflect a previous investigation and development of my ideas about the movements and dynamics of the figure

as well as those found in the land. Six pieces are of unglazed stoneware and porcelain clays, and six are of cast iron. Also included are four black and white wood-block prints and two life drawings in pencil.

The clay and iron pieces are not large in scale, but they have a monumental quality and a massiveness which is suggested even by the smaller pieces. The clay has been worked from the outside but the success of the piece depends upon a thrust or push from within and the ensuing interaction between the outer surface and the core.

These pieces were made by manipulating a mass of wet clay - by wedging, slicing, squeezing, dropping or leaning into the mass until forms evolved which captured fragments or segments or the movement of the figure. The manipulation at some point becomes more refined and deliberate, usually by paddling or patting or gently rolling the form. Throughout I try to maintain the quality of spontaneity and the immediacy of form which is inherent in wet clay.

Porcelain has been used for its lightness and brightness and for its capacity to retain the slightest marks of the hand or tool on its surface. When bisque-fired, it has a smooth, warm, almost shell-like quality. This lightness is suggestive of the way a figure appears in, and is modeled by a strong light. The stoneware pieces, not so reflective of light as the porcelain pieces, are more suggestive of mass.

The original models of the cast iron pieces were of stoneware clay. The models were simple in form, which facilitated the process of casting them in metal. Iron was chosen for its inherent qualities of heaviness and strength, and particularly for the rich variations possible in color and texture. Three of the pieces were painted with Alodine, a chemical more commonly used to etch aluminum, causing the iron to turn a rich, dark black-green color. All of the pieces were rubbed with stove black. This not only protects the surface and prevents rust from forming, but serves as a patina, darkening depressions and restoring the surfaces to a less shiny, deeper silvery-grey color.

The wood-block prints were derived from drawings of the figure. Small pencil sketches were made from sections of the drawings, and the forms were reduced to simple shapes and lines. I then freely sketched the idea on a board and cut. The design of the print was conceived to take full advantage of not only the grain of the wood, but also of the fine Japanese UWA paper which has a grain of its own. In cutting I strove for a spontaneity of line and a balance of mass and space.

This thesis represents an exploration of the interaction of mass and space. The materials used in the sculptures are clay and cast iron. The prints and drawings supplement the main body of sculptural work as a two-dimensional investigation of the same problems. The eighteen works were

exhibited in the Weatherspoon Gallery of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro from May 5 through May 12, 1974. A set of 35mm slides of the pieces is on file in the Jackson Library of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.